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ABSTRACT

This program prepares secondary level teachers by providing a systematized program of field experiences which serves the purpose of both screening and of sensitizing students to the realities of a career in secondary education. Students in this program are required to test their interest in teaching by working with secondary students in local schools and other community agencies before beginning their student teaching. This program requires that each student preparing for a career in secondary education demonstrate a minimum level of competency by actually working outside the college in community learning sites. Working with teenagers at these sites enables the student to indicate that he/she has not only the ability to get along with teenagers, but also the capacity to adapt subject matter to the particular level of the learner. The systematized program allows students to follow several paths through several kinds of experiences. At each step, the student is encouraged either to go on to the next phase, to repeat the current field experience, or to consider another career. At no point is he/she locked into a career in education. (Author/BD)

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

A Systematized Field Experience Program: Pre-Service in Secondary Education

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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This program prepares secondary level teachers (grades 7-12) by providing a systematized program of field experiences, which serves the purpose both of screening and of sensitizing students to the realities of a career in secondary education. Students are required to test their interest in teaching by working with students in local schools and other community agencies before beginning their student teaching.

The theory behind this program is that every student who thinks he wants to enter the teaching profession should demonstrate a minimum level of competency by actually working outside the college in community learning sites. Each student in the pre-service program must have opportunities to work with other learners, to indicate that he has not only the ability to get along with teen-agers, but also the capacity to adapt subject matter to the particular level of the learner.

Our systematized program allows students to follow several paths through several kinds of experiences. At each step, the student is encouraged either to go on to the next phase, to repeat the current field experience, or to consider another career. At no point is he locked in to a career in education.

Of course there is no guarantee that every student who completes the program satisfactorily will be a good teacher. However, our experience has shown that those who are successful in this field experience program turn out to be better than average student teachers the next year.

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A Systematized Field Experience Program: Pre-Service in Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

Gannon College, in cooperation with the School District of the City of Erie and the Catholic Diocese of Erie, has developed a model of creative pre-service teacher education. The program, which has evolved during the past six years, allows and encourages potential teacher candidates to become involved in public service types of tutoring activities in several community agencies. It is this interrelationship between the field experience opportunities and the potential of the college student that gives this program its strength and vitality.

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAM

Six years ago students began tutoring in the Erie County Jail. They taught basic literacy and also prepared residents for the 12th grade G. E. D. exam in the areas of English, reading and math. This became so successful that students asked for additional experiences. We "adopted" a local diocesan school (grades 1-8) that was attempting to individualize their instruction. They were successful, and so were we.

Next, we found a local urban public junior high school that draws heavily from the "Model Cities Area" of Erie. The principal (who later became Superintendent of Schools) encouraged us to set up and staff a learning lab program there. Soon afterwards, we were invited to work with St. Benedict's Academy, a local all-girl Catholic preparatory school (grades 9-12). Finally, we were invited to send our students to the local technical high school to work with the students and teachers there.

These institutions continue to be the solid foundation of our field experience program. We still use all of these sites (including the jail) to get students ready to go into student teaching.

OBJECTIVES OF PROGRAM

1. To provide tutoring help for students in local secondary schools when they request it.

2. To provide a realistic type of learning environment for college students who are considering teaching as a career.

3. To allow students to develop and practice those helping skills essential to successful growth as a secondary-level teacher.

4. To give students a professional view of the teaching profession by allowing them to interact with teachers and administrators in a variety of settings.

5. To help students decide early in their college career whether or not teaching is for them.

PERSONNEL

Gannon College is a small, private, Catholic, urban college. Students cannot "major" in education; they must major in a subject matter area. In their electives, they enter the pre-professional education sequence of courses and field experiences. Successful completion of the entire sequence qualifies the students to receive the Instructional I Certificate in secondary education in their academic field of concentration. Because of this emphasis, the Education Department itself consists of only two full-time and three part-time persons.

None-the-less, the Education Department, through the cooperation of the rest of the college, manages to provide the kind of education that students feel is important to them. The Gannon Education Club acts as a student advisory group to the Education Department, encouraging a free exchange of information and ideas.

The following is a list of the people who are vital to the continuous and solid development of our field experience program:

(a) Superintendent of Schools, School District of the City of Erie — Richard Hilinski

(b) Coordinator of Science/Math School District of the City of Erie — Carl Minzenberger

(c)	Principal, Wilson Junior High School (now becoming a Middle School)	James Murfree
(d)	Student Director of Learning Lab, Wilson Junior High School	Mary Cooper
(e)	Principal, Cathedral Learning Center	Sr. Catherine Manning
(f)	Principal, St. Benedict's Academy	Sr. Christine Vladimiroff
(g)	Principal, Tech Memorial High School	Victor Donovan
(h)	Director, Adult Learning Center	Ron Fronzaglia
(i)	Warden, Erie County Jail	Al Skonieczka
(j)	Vice-President, Academic Affairs, Gannon College	Dr. Joseph Scottino
(k)	Dean, Humanities Division, Gannon College	Msgr. Louis Lorei
(l)	Director of Special Programs, Gannon College	Dr. Richard Herbstritt
(m)	Associate Professor of Education, Gannon College	Paul Adams
(n)	Chairman, Education Department, Gannon College	Dr. Robert Wehrer

BUDGET

The budget for this program is included in the annual budget for the Education Department and is not in a separate category. The total budget for the department is about $50,000 per year, covering the teaching, administration, and coordination of all department activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

Our approach to teacher education seems to have many advantages for all concerned. This program could be a model for those who say they don't have the monies or resources to conduct a first-rate field experience program. While the program is not as sophisticated as those developed by larger schools with greater resources, the developmental pattern is the same. The program allows Education Department faculty to interact frequently with local school officials and teachers in a meaningful way, in their own schools.

We also feel that by encouraging students to work in the County Jail, we are helping them to develop the sensitivities needed by teachers in an urban setting. Besides this, they are performing a public service, greatly appreciated by the residents. It is also good experience for the prospective urban teacher, who will no doubt have to deal with juveniles in trouble with the law.

Another contribution to education that this program provides is that of encouraging students to screen themselves out of a career in teaching if they feel that they don't fit in. Not everyone who takes an education course should be encouraged to become a teacher. The field experiences seem to call forth more honest "soul searching" and a more critical view of personal success. The college faculty members have a vital counseling role to play as they observe their students attempting to put theory into practice.

Finally, this field experience program gives students a chance to see schools, teachers, administrators, school boards, and students in action. Such a first-hand experience, we believe, is invaluable in helping the student evaluate the possibility of a teaching career. His ultimate decision is based on practical experience, not just textbook examples and theoretical discussions.

EVALUATION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

A variety of methods are used to assess the quality of the program:

1. Individual faculty members are required to allow students to fill out evaluation forms on the course completed. The Chairman of the Education Department goes over them with the various faculty members and then prepares a report to the Dean of Humanities.

2. Each teacher or administrator who is working with a student fills out a rating form that is then read by the student and placed in his college certification folder.

3. The Education Department faculty meet quarterly to discuss the success of the past semester and to offer suggestions for improvement.

4. A Teacher Certification Advisory Council, made up of college administrators, faculty, school administrators, teachers, and students, meets twice a year to review the progress of the total program and to make recommendations.